

11805. acc. 6

**OBSERVATIONS**  
**ON THE 22. STANZA**  
**IN THE 9th. CANTO OF**  
**the 2d. Book of SPENCERS**  
**Faery Queen.**

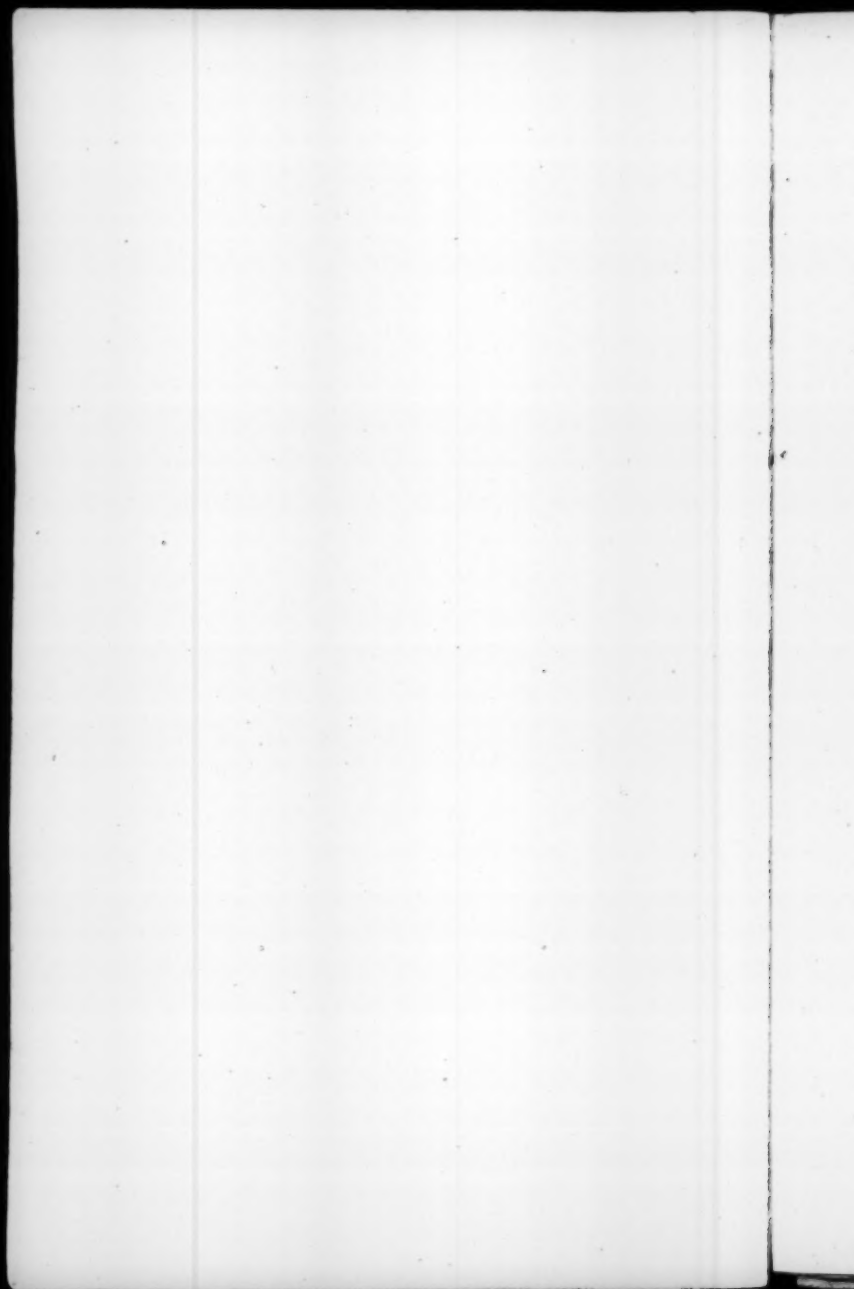
**Full of excellent Notions**  
**concerning the Frame of**  
**Man, and his rationall Soul.**

**Written by the Right Noble**  
**and Illustrious Knight Sir *Kenelm***  
***Digby*, at the request of a Friend.**

X



**L O N D O N :**  
**Printed for *Daniel Frere* Bookseller,**  
**at the Red-Bull in Little**  
**Brittain. 1643.**





Tho.<sup>o</sup>. Holley Esq.<sup>r</sup> F. S. A.





11805. acc. 6

OBSERVATIONS

ON THE 22. STANZA

IN THE 9th. CANTO OF

the 2d. Book of SPENCERS

Faery Queen.

Full of excellent Notions

concerning the Frame of

Man, and his rationall Soul.

Written by the Right Noble

and Illustrious Knight Sir *Kenelm*

Digby, at the request of a Friend.

X



LONDON:

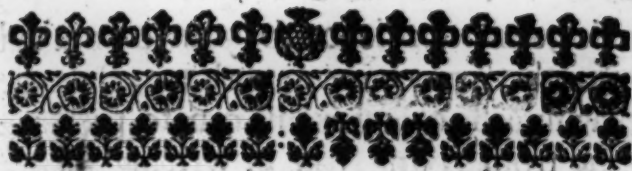
Printed for *Daniel Frere* Bookseller,

at the Red-Bull in Little

Brittain. 1643.



te  
in  
he  
fo  
th  
I



# OBSERVATIONS

on the 22. *Stanza* in the 9<sup>th</sup>.

Canto of the 2d. Book of

SPENCER'S Faery Queene,

written by the Request

of a Friend.

*My most honour'd Friend,*



Am too well acquainted  
with the weakneses of  
mine abilities (far unfit  
to undergo such a Task  
as I have in hand) to flat-  
ter my self with the hope I may either  
inform your understanding, or do my self  
honour by what I am to write. But I am  
so desirous you should be possess'd with  
the true knowledge of what a bent will  
I have upon all occasions to do you ser-

2 Observations on the 22. Stanza

vice, that obedience to your command weigheth much more with me, then the lawfulnessse of any excuse can, to preserve me from giving you in writing such a testimonie of my ignorance and erring Phantasie as I fear this will prove. Therefore without any more circumstance, I will, as I can, deliver to you in this paper, what th'other day I discoursed to you upon the 22. Staffe of the ninth *Canto* in the second Book of that matchlesse Poem, *The Faery Queen*, written by our English *Virgil*; whose words are these:

*The Frame thereof seem'd partly Circular,  
And part Triangular: O work divine!  
Those two the first and last proportions are;  
The one, imperfect, mortall, feminine;  
Th'other immortal, perfect, masculine; (Base,  
And twixt them both a Quadrate was the  
Proportion'd equally by seven and nine;  
Nine was the Circle set in Heavens place,  
All which compacted made a goodly Diapase.*

In

In this Staffe the Author seems to me to proceed in a different manner from what he doth elsewhere generally through his whole Book. For in other places, although the beginning of his Allegory or mysticall sense, may be obscure, yet in the processe of it, he doth himself declare his own conceptions in such sort as they are obvious to any ordinarie capacitie: But in this, he seems onely to glance at the profoundest notions that any Science can deliver us, and then on a sudden (as it were) recalling himself out of an Enthusiasme, he returns to the gentle Relation of the Allegoricall History he had begun, leaving his Readers to wander up and down in much obscuritie, & to come within much danger of erring at his Intention in these lines? Which I conceive to be dictated by such a learned Spirit, and so generally a knowing Soul, that were there nothing else extant of *Spencers* writing, yet these few words would make me esteeme him no whit inferiour to the most fa-

mous men that ever have been in any  
 age: as giving an evident testimonie  
 herein, that he was throughly vers'd in the  
 Mathematicall Sciences, in Philosophy,  
 and in Divinity, to which this might  
 serve for an ample Theme to make large  
 Commentaries upon. In my praises up-  
 on this subject, I am confident that the  
 worth of the Author will preserve me  
 from this Censure, that my Ignorance  
 onely begets this Admiration, since he  
 hath written nothing that is not admi-  
 rable. But that it may appear I am gui-  
 ded somewhat by my own Judgement  
 (tho' it be a meane one) and not by im-  
 plicite Faith, and that I may in the best  
 manner I can, comply with what you ex-  
 pect from me, I will no longer hold you  
 in suspense, but begin immediately, (tho'  
 abruptly) with the declaration of what  
 I conceive to be the true sense of this  
 place, which I shall not go about to  
 adorne with any plausible discourses, or  
 with Authorities and examples drawne  
 from others writings (since my want  
 both

both of conveniency and learning would make me fall very short herein) but it shall be enough for me to intimate mine own conceptions, and offer them up to you in their own simple and naked form, leaving to your better Judgement the examination of the weight of them, and after perusall of them, beseeching you to reduce them and me if you perceive us erring.

Tis evident that the Authors intention in this *Canto* is to describe the bodie of a man inform'd with a rationall sou', and in prosecution of that designe he sets down particularly the severall parts of the one and of the other: But in this *Stanza* he comprehends the generall description of them both, as (being joyned together to frame a compleat Man) they make one perfect compound, which will the better appear by taking a survey of every severall clause thereof by it self.

*"The Frame thereof seemd partly Circular,*

*"And part Triangular——*

By these Figures, I conceive that he means the mind and body of Man; the first being by him compared to a Circle, and the latter to a Triangle. For as a Circle of all Figures is the most perfect, and includeth the greatest space, and is every way full and without Angles, made by the continuance of one onely line: so mans soul is the noblest and most beautifull Creature, that God hath created, and by it we are capable of the greatest gifts that God can bestow, which are Grace, Glory, and Hypostaticall Union of the Humane nature to the Divine, and she enjoyeth perfect freedome and libertie in all her Actions, and is made without composition, which no Figures are that have Angles (for they are caus'd by the coincidence of severall lines) but of one pure substance which was by God breath'd into a Body made of such compounded



pounded earth as in the preceding *Stanza* the Author describes. And this is the exact Image of him that breathed it, representing him as fully as tis possible for any creature which is infinitely distant from a Creator. For, as God hath neither beginning nor ending: so, neither of these can be found in a Circle, although that being made of the successive motion of a line, it must be supposed to have a beginning somewhere: God is compared to a Circle whose Center is every where, but his circumference no where: But mans soul is a Circle, whose circumference is limited by the true center of it, which is onely God. For as a circumference doth in all parts alike respect that indivisible Point, and as all lines drawn from the inner side of it, do make right Angles within it, when they meet therein: so all the interiour actions of mans soul ought to have no other respective Point to direct themselves unto, but God; and as long as they make right Angles, which is, that they keep the exact

act middle of virtue, and decline not to either of the sides where the contrary vices dwell, they cannot fail, but meet in their Center. By the Triangular Figure he very aptly designs the body: for as the Circle is of all other Figures the most perfect and most capacious: so the Triangle is most imperfect, and includes least space. It is the first and lowest of all Figures; for fewer then 3 right Angles cannot comprehend and inclose a superficies, having but 3 angles they are all acute (if it be equilaterall) and but equall to 2 *right*; in which respect all other regular Figures consisting of more then 3 lines, do exceed it.

(May not these be resembled to the 3 great compounded Elements in mans bodie, to wit, Salt, Sulphur and Mercurie, which mingled together make the naturall heat and radicall moysture, the 2 qualities whereby man liveth?) For the more lines that go to comprehend the Figure, the more and the greater the Angles are, and the nearer it comes to the

the p  
A T  
lines  
not n  
ous t  
tion  
like  
poun  
are n  
not  
but  
upon  
hath  
thre  
ritu  
dies  
Tri  
com  
it li  
whi  
bod  
fior  
me  
sup  
cor

the perfection and capacitie of a Circle.

A Triangle is composed of severall lines, and they of Points, which yet do not make a quantitie by being contiguous to one another: but rather the motion of them doth describe the lines. In like manner the Body of man is compounded of the foure Elements which are made of the foure primarie qualities, not compounded of them (for they are but Accidents) but by their operation upon the first matter. And as a Triangle hath three lines, so a solid Body hath three dimensions, to wit, Longitude, Latitude and Profunditie. But of all bodies, Man is of the lowest rank, (as the Triangle is among Figures) being composed of the Elements which make it liable to alteration and corruption. In which consideration of the dignitie of bodies, I divide them by a generall division, into sublunarie (which are the elementated ones) and Æthereall, which are supposed to be of their own nature, incorruptible, and peradventure there are  
some

some other *species* of corporeall substances, which is not of this place to dispute.

*O work divine !*

Certainly of all Gods works, the noblest and perfectest is Man, and for whom indeed all others were done. For, if we consider his *soul*, it is the very Image of God. If his *bodie*, it is adorn'd with the greatest beautie and most excellent symmetry of parts, of any created thing: whereby it witnesseth the perfection of the Architect, that of so droffie mold is able to make so rare a fabrick: If his *operations*, they are free: If his *end*, it is eternall glory. And if you take *all together*, Man is a little world, an exact type of the great world, and of God himself. But in all this, me thinks, the admirablest work is the joyning together of the two *different* and indeed *opposite* substances in Man, to make one perfect compound; the *Soul* and the *Body*, which are of so contrary a nature, that their *uniting* seems

to

to be a Miracle. For how can the one inform and work in the other, since there's no mean of operation (that we know of) between a spirituall substance and a corporeall? yet we see that it doth: as hard it is to find the true proportion between a Circle and a Triangle; yet, that there is a just proportion, and that they may be equall, *Archimedes* hath left us an ingenious demonstration; but in reducing it to a Probleme, it fails in this, that because the proportion between a crooked line and a straight one, is not known, one must make use of a Mechanick way of measuring the *peripherie* of the one, to convert it to the side of the other.

These two the first and last proportions are.

What I have already said concerning a Circle and a Triangle, doth sufficiently unfold what is meant in this verse. Yet twill not be amisse to speak one word more hereof in this place. All things that have existence, may be divided into  
three

12 *Observations on the 22. Stanza*

three *Classes*; which are, either what is pure and simple in it self, or what hath a nature compounded of what is simple, or what hath a nature compounded of what is compounded. In continued quantitie this may be exemplified by a Point, a line, and a superficies in Bodies: and in numbers, by an unity, a Denary, and a Centenary. The first, which is onely pure & simple, like an indivisible point, or an unity, hath relation onely to the Divine nature: That point then moving in a sphericall manner (which serves to expresse the perfection of Gods actions) describes the Circles of our souls, and of Angels, and intellectuall substances, which are of a pure and simple nature, but receiveth that from what is so, in a perfecter manner, and that hath his, from none else. Like lines that are made by the flowing of points; or Denaries that are composed of Unities: beyond both which there is nothing. In the last place, Bodies are to be rankt, which are composed of the Elements: and they likewise  
suffer

suffer composition, and may very well be compared to the lowest of the Figures which are composed of lines, that owe their being to Points (and such are Triangles) or to Centenaries that are composed of Denaries, and they of Unities. But if we will compare these together by proportion, God must be left out, since there is as infinite distance betweene the Simplicities and Perfection of his nature, and the composition and imperfection of all created substances, as there is between an indivisible Point and a continue quantitie, or between a simple Unitie and a compounded number. So that onely the other two kinds of substance do enter into this consideration: and of them I have already proved, that mans Soul is of the one the noblest, (being dignified by hypostaticall Union above all other intellectuall substances) and his elementated Body, of the other the most low and corruptible. Whereby it is evident, that those two are the first and last Proportions, both in respect of

B

their

their own Figure, and of what they expressed.

*“The one imperfect, Mortall, Feminine:*

*“Th’other immortal, perfect, Masculine.*

Mans Body hath all the proprieties of imperfect matter. It is but the Patient: of it self alone, it can do nothing: it is liable to corruption and dissolution if it once be deprived of the form which actuates it, and which is incorruptible and immortal. And as the feminine Sex is imperfect, and receives perfection from the masculine: so doth the Body from the Soul, which to it is in lieu of a male. And as in corporall generations the female affords but grosse and passive matter, to which the Male gives active heat and prolificall vertue: so in spirituall generations (which are the operations of the minde) the body administers onely the Organs, which if they were not imployed by the Soul, would of themselves serve for nothing. And as there is



a mutuall appetite between the Male and the Female, betweene matter and forme; So there is betweene the bodie and the soul of Man, but what ligament they have, our Author defineth not (and it may be Reason is not able to attaine to it) yet he tels us what is the foundation that this Machine rests on, and what keeps the parts together; in these words.

(Base.

“ And twixt them both, a *Quadrato* was the

By which *Quadrato*, I conceive, that he meaneth the foure principall humors in mans Bodie, viz. *Choler*, *Blood*, *Phleme*, and *Melancholy*: which if they be distempered and unfitly mingled, dissolution of the whole doth immediately ensue: like to a building which falls to ruine, if the foundation and Base of it be unsound or disordered. And in some of these, the vitall spirits are contained and preserved, which the other keep in convenient temper; and as long as they

16 *Observations on the 22. Stanza*

do so, the soul and bodie dwell together like good friends : so that these foure are the Base of the conjunction of the other two, both which he saith, are

*“ Proportion’d equally by seven and nine.*

In which words, I understand he meanes the influences of the superior substances ( which governe the inferior ) into the two differing parts of Man ; to wit, of the *Starres* (the most powerfull of which, are the seven Planets, into his body : and of the Angels divided into nine Hierarchies or Orders) into his soul : which in his *Astrophenel*, he saith is

*“ By soveraigne choice from th’ heavenly  
Quires select,  
“ And lineally deriv’d from Angels race.*

And as much as the one governe the Body, so much the other do the Minde. Wherein is to be considered, that some  
are

are of opinion, how at the instant of a child's conception, or rather more effectually at the instant of his Birth, the conceived sperme or tender Body doth receive such influence of the Heavens as then raigne over that place, where the conception or birth is made: And all the Starres or virtuell places of the celestiall Orbes participating the qualities of the seven Planets (according to which they are distributed into so many Clases, or the compounds of them) it comes to passe, that according to the varietie of the severall Aspects of the one and of the other, there are various inclinations and qualities in mens bodies, but all reduced to seven generall heads and the compounds of them, which being to be varied innumerable wayes; cause as many different effects, yet the influence of some one Planet continually predominating. But when the matter in a womans wombe is capable of a soul to inform it, then God sendeth one from Heaven into it.

————— *Eternall God,*  
*In Paradise whilome did plant this Flower,*  
*Whence he it fetcht out of her native place,*  
*And did in Stock of earthly flesh inrace.*

And this opinion the Author more plainly expressees himself to be of, in another work, where he saith :

*There she beholds with high aspiring  
 thought  
 The cradle of her own Creation,  
 Amongst the seats of Angels heavenly  
 wrought.*

Which whether it have been created ever since the beginning of the world, and reserv'd in some fit place till due time, or be created on emergent occasion ; no man can tell : but certain it is, that ~~it~~ is immortall, according to what I said before, when I spake of the Circle which hath no ending, and an uncertain beginning. The messengers to convey which soul into the bodie, are the Intel-  
 ligences

ligences which move the Orbes of Heaven, who according to their severall natures communicate to it severall proprieties: and they most, who are Governours of those Starres at that instant, who have the superioritie in the planetary aspects. Whereby it comes to passe, that in all inclinations there's much affinity betweene the Soul and the Body, being that the like is betweene the Inteligences and the Starres, both which communicate their vertues to each of them. And these Angels, being, as I said before, of nine severall Hierarchies, there are so many principle differences in humane souls, which participate most of their proprieties, with whom in their descent they made the longest stay, and that had most active power to work on them, and accompanied them with a peculiar *Genius* (which is according to their severall Governments) like the same kind of water that running through various conduits wherein severall aromaticke and odoriferous things are laid,

26 *Observations on the 22. Stanza*

do acquire severall kinds of tastes and smells. For it is supposed, that in their first Creation, all Souls are alike, and that their differing proprieties arise to them afterwards when they passe through the spheres of the governing Intelligences. So that by such their influence, it may truly be said, that

*“Nine was the Circle set in Heavens place.*

Which verse, by assigning this office to the nine, and the proper place to the Circle, gives much light to what is said before. And for a further confirmation that this is the Authors opinion, read attentively the sixt *Canto* of the 3. Book, where most learnedly and at large he delivers the *Tenets* of this Philosophie; and for that. I commend to you to take particular notice of the 2d. and thirty two *Stanzas*: as also the last of his *Epithalamion*: and surveying his works, you shall finde him a constant disciple of *Platoes School*.

*“ All*

*"All which compacted, made a goodly  
Diapase.*

In Nature there is not to be found a more compleat and more exact Concordance of all parts, then that which is betweene the compaction and conjunction of the Body and Soul of Man: Both which although they consist of many and most different faculties and parts, yet when they keepe due time with one another, they altogether make the most perfect Harmony that can be imagined. And as the nature of sounds, that consist of friendly consonancies and accords, is to mingle themselves with one another, and to slide into the eare with much sweetnesse, where by their unity they last a long time and delight it: where as contrarily, discords continually jarre, and fight together, and will not mingle with one another: but all of them striving to have the victory, their reluctance and disorder gives a speedie  
end

end to their sounds, which strike the Eare in a harsh and offensive manner, and there die in the very beginning of their Conflict: In like manner, when a mans Actions are regular, and directed towards God, they become like the lines of a Circle, which all meet in the Center, then his musick is most excellent and compleat, and all together are the Authors of that blessed harmony which maketh him happie in the glorious vision of Gods perfections, wherein the minde is filled with high knowledges and most pleasing contemplations; and the senses, as it were, drowned in eternall delight; and nothing can interrupt this Joy, this Happinesse, which is an everlasting Diapase: Whereas on the contrary, if a mans actions be disorderly, and consisting of discords, (which is, when the sensitive part rebels and wrestles with the Rationall, striving to oppress it) then this musick is spoiled, and instead of eternall life, pleasure and joy, it causeth perpetuall death, horroure, paine



paine, and misery. Which unfortunate estate the Poet describes elsewhere; as in the conclusion of this Staffe he intimates: the other happy one, which is the never-failing Reward of such an obedient bodie, and ethereall and vertuous minde, as he makes to be the seat of the bright Virgin *Alma*, mans worthiest inhabitant, *Reason*. Her I feele to speake within me, and chide me for my bold Attempt, warning me to stray no further. For what I have said (considering how weakly it is said) your Command is all the excuse that I can pretend. But since my desire to obey that, may bee seene as well in a few lines, as in a large Discourse, it were indiscretion in me to trouble you with more, or to discover to you more of my Ignorance. I will onely begge pardon of you for this blotted and interlined paper, whose Contents are so meane that it cannot deserve the paines of a Transcription, which if you make difficulty to grant to it, for my sake, let it obtain it for having been  
yours. And

24 *Observations on the 22. Stanza*

And now I return to you also the Book that contains my Text, which yesterday you sent me, to fit this part of it with a Comment, which peradventure I might have performed better, if either I had afforded my selfe more time, or had had the conveniencie of some other books apt to quicken my Invention, to whom I might have been beholding for enlarging my understanding in some things that are treated here, although the Application should still have been my own: With these helps perhaps I might have dived further into the Authors Intention (the depth of which cannot be sounded by any that is lesse learned than he was) But I perswade my self very strongly, that in what I have said there's nothing contradictory to it, and that an intelligent and well learned man proceeding on my grounds might compose a worthe and true Commentarie on this Theme: Upon which I wonder how I stumbled, considering how many learned men have failed in the Interpretation

the tation of it, and have all at the first hearing, approved my opinion.

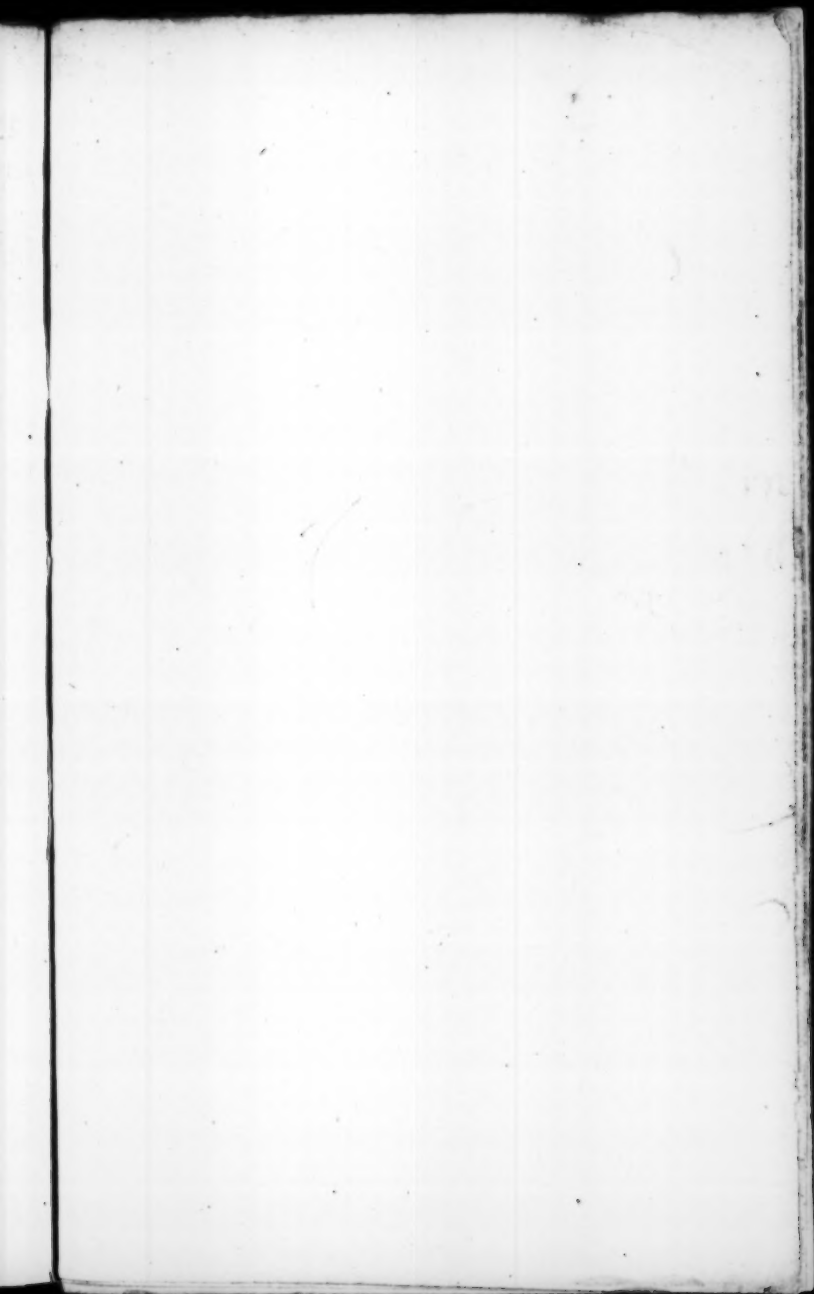
But it was Fortune that made me fall upon it, when first this *Stanza* was read to me for an indissoluble Riddle. And the same Discourse I made upon it, the first halfe quarter of an houre that I saw it, I send you here, without having reduced it to any better form, or added any thing at all unto it. Which I beseech you receive benignely, as coming from

Your most affectionate Friend  
and humble Servant,

*Kenelm Digby.*

*FINIS.*







1854 26/9  
Society 1278. H/-





